

MEMORANDUM

October 30, 2013

TO: Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee
FROM: ^{GO} Glenn Orlin, Deputy Council Administrator
SUBJECT: Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan: MD 355 North, MD 355 South, and North Bethesda Transitway Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors

Councilmembers: Please bring your copy of the Draft Master Plan to this worksession.

1. Corridor 3: MD 355 North (see pp. 38-40, 91-93). This is a proposed 14.1-mile corridor that would run almost entirely on MD 355 between the Rockville Metro Station and Redgrave Place in Clarksburg. The southern portion of the corridor lies within the City of Rockville, and the center portion lies within the City of Gaithersburg, so the routes, station, and right-of-way recommendations for these segments fall under municipal planning jurisdictions. Both cities support BRT in this corridor, but they have not as yet developed specific guidance in their respective master plans. Staff from both municipalities will be present at this worksession.

MD 355 is a heavily used transit corridor today, especially north of the Shady Grove Metro Station. The projected ridership is higher than for any other corridor with the exception of MD 355 South. The Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) will serve the portions of Gaithersburg and Germantown west of I-270, but not east of it. The MD 355 North corridor BRT would serve as an important complement to the CCT.

Through Rockville, Shady Grove, and Gaithersburg. The southern end of this route would serve the core of Rockville, Montgomery College/Rockville, Shady Grove, King Farm, Old Town Gaithersburg, and the Lakeforest Mall area. The Draft Plan calls for a two-lane median busway. In most places there are 6 through lanes but with little or no opportunity to widen MD 355 enough to create two additional lanes throughout. Therefore, the two median lanes would have to be created by repurposing existing lanes. Traffic will be fairly balanced on this segment of MD 355, so if lanes cannot be repurposed, the only other plausible build option would be a single-lane, two-way median bus lane with periodic passing lanes.

In Old Town Gaithersburg the constraints are very tight. There are only 4 through lanes between the Father Cuddy Bridge over CSX and Odendhal Avenue. Widening that section may not be possible,

as it is abutted by several historic buildings and a cemetery. A single-lane, two-way median bus lane may be the maximum treatment possible.

North of the Rockville Metro Station the Draft Plan recommends 10 stations. This is too many to achieve a rapid bus service. The proposed station at the MD 355/Shady Grove Road intersection should not be included in the plan. It would be surrounded by highway-oriented retail in one corner, the County's transfer station across the street, and a freeway interchange in the other two quadrants, so there will be very few walk-ons/walk-offs there. Nearly all the other stations in this area are in Rockville and Gaithersburg. Council staff would recommend to Gaithersburg, however, that the two stations proposed at Education Avenue and at Brookes Avenue be replaced by one station, perhaps near Fulks Corner Avenue between these two. Also, the two proposed stations at Odendhal Avenue and at Montgomery Village Avenue are very close to each other; they should be replaced by one station in between, perhaps at Lakeforest Boulevard/Perry Parkway.

Within the few non-municipal segments of this part of MD 355 North, the Draft Plan calls for 3' of additional master-planned right-of-way between Ridgemont Avenue and Indianola Road. But based on the further analysis reported in the October 25 packet, this added right-of-way is not needed if the plan is addressing only the needs of BRT.

Councilmember Andrews asked whether the Shady Grove Sector Plan staging requirement for a grade-separated interchange at MD 355/Gude Drive is affected by this plan. The answer is no: as long as this interchange remains part of the County's master plan—and this plan would not remove it—then the staging requirement remains that Stage 2 of development there cannot occur until the interchange has been programmed for completion within four years.

Councilmember Andrews also asked whether this plan would affect MTA's planning of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) connection with the Shady Grove Metro Station. There is no impact. Detailed corridor planning needs to be done which will determine whether BRT service will stay on MD 355 or divert into the Shady Grove Metro Station, perhaps using the CCT's bus lanes.

Council staff recommendation: Concur with the route as recommended in the Draft Plan. Concur with the Draft Plan's minimum master-planned right-of-way within the non-municipal segments. Show stations at: Rockville Metro, Montgomery College/Rockville, Gude Drive, Shady Grove Metro/King Farm Boulevard, Old Town Gaithersburg (near Fulks Corner Avenue), Lakeforest Boulevard/Perry Parkway, Watkins Mill Road, and Professional Drive. The maximum treatment would be either a two-lane median busway repurposed from existing lanes, or a single-lane, two-way bus lane in segments where two lanes cannot be repurposed.

Through Germantown East. Proceeding north into Germantown East, the Draft Plan continues to call for a median busway with two lanes repurposed from the 6 master-planned through lanes.¹ Stations are proposed at Middlebrook Road, MD 118, and Shakespeare Boulevard, the latter at the east end of the Milestone Shopping Center. It would then run in mixed traffic north to Redgrave Place in the center of Clarksburg, with five more stations in between. The Draft Plan also calls for adding two median lanes on Shakespeare Boulevard and a block of Seneca Meadows Parkway in order to connect

¹ South of Middlebrook Road the 6 through lanes currently exist. Between Middlebrook and Ridge Roads, 4-5 of the master-planned 6 lanes currently exist.

the MD 355 BRT to the East Branch of the CCT (as described in the Germantown Employment Area Sector Plan, 2009). The CCT is a two-lane busway, and the East Branch's master-planned right-of-way follows north over Father Hurley Boulevard, through the Milestone Center Business Park, and rejoins the CCT's mainline at the Dorsey Mill Road station. The CCT would continue north along Observation Drive into Clarksburg, with stations near Little Seneca Parkway, Shawnee Lane, and Redgrave Place.

However, staying on the Draft Plan's alignment through Germantown East would have it pass by single-family housing (some detached, some townhouses) and the big box and strip commercial retailers in the Milestone Center, none of which will generate a substantial number of walk on/walk off transit users for the BRT. Furthermore, this alignment would miss the opportunity to connect with three major destinations in Germantown East: Holy Cross Hospital, Montgomery College/Germantown, and Seneca Meadows Corporate Park.

Council staff recommends an alternative route (see ©1). Heading north:

- From the Draft Plan's proposed station at MD 355/Middlebrook Road, follow Middlebrook Road west on two repurposed lanes to Observation Drive.
- Along Observation Drive, in two repurposed lanes (one in each direction), go north to a station at Holy Cross Hospital and the future Hercules Pinkney Life Sciences Park.
- Along Observation Drive, in two repurposed lanes, go north to the new traffic circle, west to Goldenrod Lane (south of the new Montgomery College Bioscience Education Building and the globe water tower), and north to a station on the west side of Montgomery College/Germantown at the Paul Peck Academic and Innovation Building, also home to one of the County's business incubators.
- Along Goldenrod Lane, in two repurposed lanes, go north across MD 118 to Seneca Meadows Parkway, to a station at the Seneca Meadows Corporate Park.

From this point north, the alignment would follow the already master-planned East Branch of the CCT:

- Continue north along the East Branch of the CCT to a station at The Shops of Seneca Meadows (behind Wegmans).

At this point the Council staff's alternative route meets up with the Draft Plan's alignment, and continues north on the East Branch of the CCT. Like the Draft Plan alignment, this alternative route through Germantown East would not require a greater minimum right-of-way than that which is already master-planned. Letters from Montgomery College and Holy Cross Hospital supporting this alternative route are attached (©2-4).

Council staff recommendation: Concur with the Draft Plan's recommendations between Gaithersburg and Middlebrook Road. Replace the Draft Plan's route and station locations in Germantown East—including the mixed-traffic segment north to Clarksburg—with the alternative alignment and station locations described above.

Council staff recommendation: Delete the master-planned East Branch bridge of the CCT over I-270. Since the alternative alignment would serve Seneca Meadows, there is no need for a second costly CCT bridge over this Interstate highway.

2. Corridor 4: MD 355 South (see pp. 41-43, 94-96). This is a proposed 9.3-mile corridor that would run entirely on Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue (MD 355) between the Rockville and Friendship Heights Metro Stations. Despite the fact that it would run directly parallel to the Red Line, it is projected to carry more riders than any other proposed BRT route in this plan. The northern portion of this corridor, between the Rockville Metro Station and 250' south of Twinbrook Parkway, is within the City of Rockville, and so the City has planning jurisdiction over it. City staff will be present at this worksession.

Through Rockville. The Draft Plan calls for a two-lane median busway from the Rockville Metro Station to the Beltway. City staff report that the right-of-way is very constrained along MD 355 between the Metro station and Richard Montgomery Drive, so if the lanes cannot be achieved by repurposing, the only other plausible build option would be a single-lane, two-way median bus lane in this short segment. From Richard Montgomery Drive to the southern city limit the City would be able to secure sufficient right-of-way for the Draft Plan's recommendation to widen Rockville Pike to add a two-lane busway in the median. Within Rockville the Draft Plan shows one station between the Rockville and Twinbrook Metro Stations: at Edmonston Drive, close to the Wintergreen Shopping Center. (Map 6 on page 42 incorrectly displays the station at the intersection with Wootton Parkway/First Street Extended.)

Council staff recommendation: Concur with the route and station locations as recommended in the Draft Plan. The maximum treatment between the Rockville Metro Station and Richard Montgomery Drive would be either a two-lane median busway repurposed from existing lanes, or a single-lane, two-way bus lane if two lanes cannot be repurposed there. From Richard Montgomery Drive south, widen Rockville Pike to add a two-lane busway in the median.

Through North Bethesda to Grosvenor Metro. The Draft Plan calls for continuing the wider cross-section on Rockville Pike through White Flint to Grosvenor to provide a two-lane median busway. The master-planned right-of-way on the Pike is recommended to be widened from the city limit south to 200' south of Hoya Street: The existing North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan recommends a 134'-wide right-of-way in this section, but the Draft Plan recommends a 150' width that is expandable to 162' through additional reservation for streetscape improvements. This is intended to duplicate the recommendations for MD 355 in the White Flint Sector Plan. The station locations in this segment would be at Hubbard Drive (Montrose Crossing), the White Flint Metro Station, and Security Lane.

Some have asked why build a BRT line on Rockville Pike at all, since Metrorail's Red Line serves the same corridor. The reason is that the Metro stations are more than a mile apart in this section, while the Rockville Pike corridor has consistently significant density of employment and housing along most of its length between Grosvenor and Shady Grove that is not within ready walking distance of a Metro station.

Council staff recommendation: Concur with the Draft Plan's recommendations on route, stations, minimum right-of-way, and maximum treatment south to the Grosvenor Metro Station.

Grosvenor Metro to Bethesda Metro. The Draft Plan calls for widening Rockville Pike to allow for a continuation of the two-lane median busway south to the Beltway. However, south of the Beltway the Pike's right-of-way is too constrained to add two more lanes without severe impacts to the Locust

Hill neighborhood to the east and the Bethesda Crest and Maplewood neighborhoods to the west. The Draft Plan recommends extending the two-lane median busway by repurposing two of the existing lanes. The Draft Plan also recommends stations in this segment at Pooks Hill Road, Cedar Lane, the Medical Center Metro Station, Cordell Avenue, and the Bethesda Metro Station. The Bethesda Metro station should be located so that both the existing (north) Metro entrance and the second (south) Metro/Purple Line entrance can be readily accessed. It is possible that two separate stations will be needed.

Unlike north of Grosvenor, in the segment between the Grosvenor, Medical Center, and Bethesda Metro Stations there is only one high-density location that is not within walking distance of Metro: Pooks Hill. The proposed Cedar Lane station is at the far corner of NIH, Stone Ridge Academy, the Marriott Scout Service Center, and neighborhoods of single-family detached homes. To improve the BRT's travel time, this station should not be included in the plan.

As for the BRT's treatment here, the Maplewood Citizens Association recommends adding a single-lane reversible bus lane in the median (presumably running southbound in the morning peak and northbound in the evening peak) but without widening the Pike (©5). This option would have the advantage of retaining the existing 6 through lanes for general traffic, but it would come at the expense of the left-turn lanes that provide some of the access to the adjacent neighborhoods.

The Bethesda Crest HOA and Locust Hill Citizens' Association support repurposing the curb lanes in each direction instead (©6-10). At this location BRT in repurposed curb lanes would appear to be superior to Draft Plan's proposal to repurpose two lanes in the median, for several reasons: they would be less costly to implement; the spots for any station can be found that is ample enough for passenger platforms; the transfer between BRT and local buses would be easy; and there would be less capacity lost to general traffic than repurposed lanes close to the median, since the capacity of curb lanes are already compromised by local buses and right-turning vehicles. The disadvantage of repurposing the curb lanes is the mere fact that a lane would be taken away from general traffic where heavy delays are already a daily occurrence.

Between Cedar Lane and Woodmont Avenue the Draft Plan calls for 3' of additional master-planned right-of-way. But based on the further analysis reported in the October 25 packet, this added right-of-way is not needed if the plan is addressing only the needs of BRT.

Council staff recommendation: Extend BRT to Bethesda, but include both the single-lane reversible median lane and the repurposed curb lanes as worthy of more detailed study during project planning. Concur with the Draft Plan's minimum master-planned right-of-way. Retain the stations at Pooks Hill, Medical Center Metro, Cordell Avenue, and Bethesda Metro, but not Cedar Lane.

Bethesda Metro to Friendship Heights Metro. The Draft Plan calls for continuing a two-lane median busway on Wisconsin Avenue south to a station at Bradley Boulevard, again by repurposing the middle two lanes from general traffic use. South of Bradley Boulevard the Draft Plan calls for repurposing the curb lanes to the District of Columbia line at a station with Friendship Heights Metro. There are segments where the Draft Plan calls for 2' of additional master-planned right-of-way. But based on the further analysis reported in the October 25 packet, this added right-of-way is not needed if the plan is addressing only the needs of BRT.

Much of the testimony and correspondence in response to the Functional Master Plan has been from residents in opposition to BRT in this segment. The testimony from the Town of Somerset and the joint testimony from the Chevy Chase West Neighborhood Association and the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights are representative (©11-15).

Council staff recommendation: Do not extend the MD 355 South corridor south of Bethesda Metro. The reason is that there is no purpose in duplicating the service already provided by the Red Line. The only proposed station between Bethesda Metro and Friendship Heights Metro would be Bradley Boulevard, and any homes or businesses near it will be within an easy walk of the programmed south entrance of the Bethesda Metro. However, in the future, should the District of Columbia consider establishing a true BRT service on Wisconsin Avenue to, say, the Cathedral area and Georgetown—where Metrorail does not now go—then the Council should reconsider BRT service in this segment.

3. Corridor 6: North Bethesda Transitway (see pp. 47-49, 100-102). This is a proposed 2.7-mile corridor that would run from the White Flint Metro Station in mixed traffic west on Old Georgetown Road to Executive Boulevard, then south on Old Georgetown Road to Rock Spring Drive as a single-lane reversible median busway. From there, a new two-lane busway would run west, parallel to and north of Rock Spring Drive and Fernwood Road (in an existing 40'-wide easement) to the I-270/Fernwood Road interchange. The BRT buses would run in mixed traffic across the bridge to the relocated Montgomery Mall Transit Center, which is already programmed in the CIP. This route would replace the current master-planned route for the North Bethesda Transitway, which runs west from the Grosvenor Metro Station along the I-270 East Spur to Rock Spring Park and Montgomery Mall.

The Council received testimony from Natalie Goldberg noting that a one-lane reversible busway is inconsistent with the development of activity centers at both ends of the corridor. She also advocates moving the planned station at Edson Lane/Poindexter Lane north to the intersection at Nicholson Lane, near Wall Park and public amenities planned there (©16-17).

The ridership in this corridor should be nearly even in each direction in both peaks. Both ends of the line are and will be major workplace destinations. If this BRT line ultimately extends to Virginia (see below), the bi-directional nature of travel will be accentuated. Therefore, a more appropriate design for the Old Georgetown Road segment between Executive Boulevard and Rock Spring Drive would be as a single-lane, two-way median bus lane, with a passing section if one is warranted.

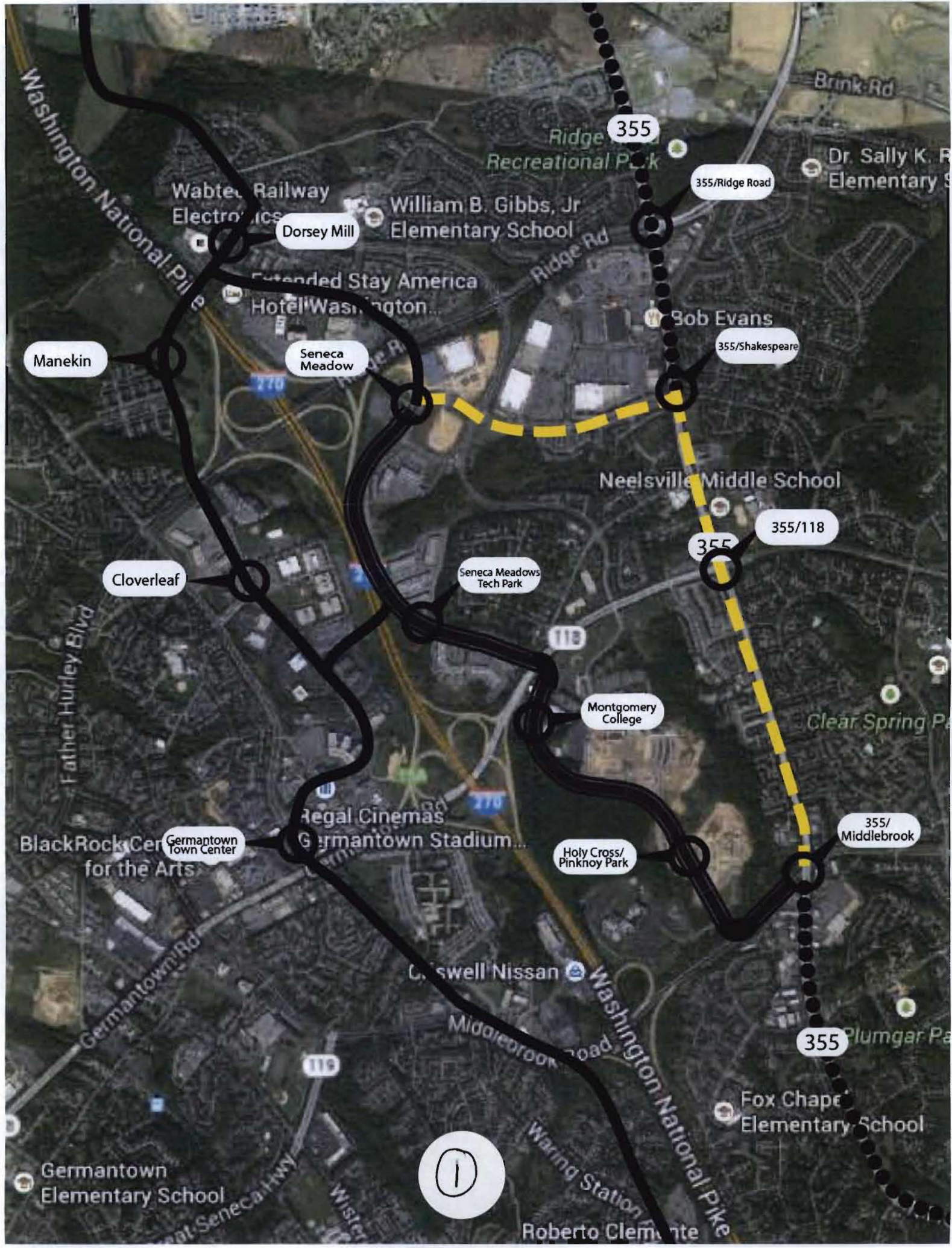
The Draft Plan recommends 7 stations in this corridor, listed on page 47. Council staff agrees with Ms. Goldberg that the station near the north end of Old Georgetown Road should be further north, either at Nicholson Lane or Executive Boulevard, at the edge of the more highly developed area of White Flint, and serving the “White Flint II” area along the western leg of Executive Boulevard. The map on page 48 is incorrect: it should display a station at Edson Lane/Poindexter Lane (or Nicholson Lane/Executive Boulevard, should the Committee agree with Council staff), and it should not display a station at Fernwood Road and Rockledge Drive.

On Old Georgetown Road between Nicholson Lane and Rock Spring Park the Draft Plan calls for 6-10' of additional master-planned right-of-way. But based on the further analysis reported in the October 25 packet, this added right-of-way is not needed if the plan addresses only the needs for BRT.

At the Fernwood Road bridge there is an existing ramp to and from I-270 north. The ramp is restricted to buses and high-occupancy vehicles (HOVs) during peak hours; in the off-peak it is open to all traffic. A complementary ramp would be desirable to/from I-270 south as well. With this additional ramp, buses, vanpools, and carpools would connect directly to the HOV lanes on the West Spur, and to the master-planned extension of these HOV lanes on the Beltway from the West Spur to and across the American Legion Bridge, connecting to an extension of Virginia's Beltway high-occupancy-toll lanes. In the summer of 2012 members of the T&E Committee met with their counterparts on the Fairfax County Supervisors, and there was a consensus that this link would significantly benefit commuters—and the economy—of both counties and states.

Without this ramp, the connection would be more circuitous. Buses would have to be diverted to Democracy Boulevard, and from there they would have to merge across several lanes of congested traffic to reach the HOV lanes, losing valuable minutes of travel time. The same is true, of course, for buses arriving from Virginia that would exit in North Bethesda.

Council staff recommendation: Concur with the Final Draft as per the route and the station locations listed on page 47, except that a station at Nicholson Lane or Executive Boulevard should replace the proposed station at Edson/Poindexter. Concur with the Draft Plan's minimum master-planned right-of-way, recognizing that there is a 40' wide easement on the north side of Rock Spring Drive and Fernwood Road. The treatment on Old Georgetown Road between Executive Boulevard and Rock Spring Drive should be a single-lane, two-way median bus lane. An HOV interchange at the I-270 West Spur and Fernwood Road should also be included in the plan. The current partial HOV interchange is not reflected in County master plans, so adding this interchange would also technically correct the master plan in this regard.





October 23, 2013

The Honorable Roger Berliner
Chair, Transportation and Environment Committee
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20901

Dear Councilmember Berliner:

Montgomery College supports the county's efforts to enhance the mobility of our residents. Success in meeting our core mission of access—access to post-secondary education—is highly dependent on a person's ability to reach the classroom. Enhanced modes of transit that are reliable, swift and affordable will no doubt enable our students to more easily balance work, family and college attendance.

The Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan now pending before the council envisions bus rapid transit (BRT) stops at or near two of the College's campuses—Takoma Park/Silver Spring and Rockville. The plan does not currently include stops within reasonable proximity to the Germantown Campus and the Hercules Pinkney Life Science Park (park) operated by the College. However, we are given to understand your staff will recommend stops at the park and the campus. The College supports this proposal and believes that both our students and the tenants in the park—particularly Holy Cross Hospital, our anchor tenant—will benefit from BRT stops. The College supports the BRT route that traverses the park and the campus, entering the park at Observation Drive and Middlebrook Road and exiting the campus at Goldenrod Lane and Route 118. Two stops should be envisioned—one at the park/hospital and one at the campus's Paul Peck Academic and Innovation Building, which is also home to a county innovation center. The BRT must follow the already planned and partially constructed four-lane roadway from Middlebrook Road, along Observation Drive to and through Goldenrod Lane to Route 118. It must also operate within the already planned right of way to maximize its value to students, employees and hospital visitors and minimize any disruption to the build-out of the park and the campus. Support of the College is dependent upon the approved plan following the above described route with associated understandings.

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240-567-5000 ■ www.montgomerycollege.edu

Central Administration
900 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Germantown Campus
20200 Observation Drive
Germantown, MD 20876

Rockville Campus
51 Mannakee Street
Rockville, MD 20850

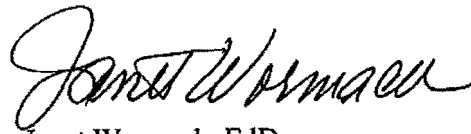
Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus
7800 Takoma Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Workforce Development
& Continuing Education
51 Mannekee Street
Rockville, MD 20850

The Honorable Roger Berliner
Chair, Transportation and Environment Committee
October 24, 2013
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed plan. We hope you will support providing access to BRT to all of the College's campuses. That includes the staff recommendation to provide enhanced BRT access to the students at the Germantown Campus and the park tenants—most specifically, Holy Cross Hospital and its employees and visitors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Janet Wormack".

Janet Wormack, EdD
Interim Senior Vice President
For Administrative and Fiscal Services

October 24, 2013

The Honorable Nancy Navarro
President
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Council President Navarro:

Holy Cross Health, a regional health delivery system that encompasses Holy Cross Hospital, Holy Cross Health Network, Holy Cross Germantown Hospital (opening in 2014), and a range of innovative exercise, health education, and self-care management programs, supports a modification to the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan as it relates to the MD 355 North Corridor.

Specifically, Holy Cross advocates that, instead of the bus transit breaking off left from MD 355 onto Shakespeare Boulevard in Germantown East, it break off left at Middlebrook Road and then turn right onto Observation Drive. From there, we propose a stop on Observation Drive in front of Holy Cross Germantown Hospital and another stop on Goldenrod Lane at the west edge of the Germantown campus of Montgomery College before proceeding onto Seneca Meadows Parkway to the east branch of the Corridor Cities Transitway and onward north.

When Holy Cross Germantown Hospital opens in October 2014, it will be the first new hospital in Montgomery County in 35 years. When planning for the hospital, Holy Cross projected that 50% of people accessing the hospital campus would arrive from Germantown south, including residents of Gaithersburg and Rockville. Having a bus transit stop on Observation Drive, directly in front of the hospital, would likely encourage more outpatients, visitors, and employees to use the transit system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kevin J. Sexton
President & CEO

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**TESTIMONY OF THE MAPLEWOOD CITIZENS ASSOCIATION REGARDING
BRT ON ROCKVILLE PIKE**

Good evening. I am Allen Myers, President of the Maplewood Citizens Association. Maplewood is located in Bethesda, bordered by Rockville Pike and Old Georgetown Road and the Capital Beltway and West Cedar Lane. A portion of a proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line would transit Rockville Pike on the east side our neighborhood.

The Maplewood Citizens Association deeply appreciates the time Councilmember Elrich devoted to his presentation about BRT at our membership meeting last night as well as his passion for this form of public transportation.

Maplewood supports efforts to improve public transportation in the County and regionally. The 2011 base realignment of neighboring Walter Reed National Military Medical Center underscores the importance of such efforts to reduce traffic congestion, maintain a quality of life in nearby established residential communities such as Maplewood, and to facilitate a positive business district in Bethesda.

However, Maplewood does have concerns about specifics of bus rapid transit between Pooks Hill Road and Cedar lane as proposed in the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan. We believe that the proposed bus alignment should be a single reversible guide way in the median that does not involve repurposing lanes, widening Rockville Pike, or taking property along the sides of the roadway.

Thanks you for your consideration of our views on this subject.

**ISSUES LIST FOR BRT ROUTE 355 SOUTH
BETWEEN THE MEDICAL CENTER AND GROSVENOR METRO STATIONS**

**BETHESDA CREST HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION AND
LOCUST HILL CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION**

This issues list is intended to assist the Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, and Environment Committee's work session on Route 355 South, in light of the initial cost estimates MC DOT Director Holmes transmitted to Chair Berliner on October 10.

In particular, we address the segment of 355 South between the Grosvenor Metro Station and the Medical Center Metro station, whose traffic and geography our communities have intensively studied as we interacted with SHA's BRAC planning efforts.

At the outset, we commend the proposed Plan for recognizing that growth in the 355-South corridor cannot be accommodated by increasing the volume of single-occupant vehicles. We also commend the Plan for recognizing that widening Rockville Pike within the Beltway for BRT purposes is not a viable option.

At the same time, we note Director Holmes' comment that "The County Executive is very concerned with affordability and prudent use of scarce financial resources"—and so are we. We also note the capital cost estimate provided for Route 355 South is \$573,000,000, or \$61,300,000 per mile, the highest of any route.

In this light, our communities urge the Council not to leave two-lane median busways as the "recommended treatment" in the Plan for implementation of BRT in our complex, constrained segment of Rockville Pike. The proposed plan specifies such a treatment simply because the computer-model forecasts used by the Planning Board indicate more than 1,600 peak-hour passengers will use this segment in 2040.

However, *use of the 1,600 peak-hour passenger metric inherently ignores cost-effectiveness considerations* compared to other treatments. This Planning Board use of a statistical assumption contrasts with the Council's affirmative responsibility to approve expenditures wisely and to raise revenues (or bonds that require debt service) only where such uses of funds achieve the most cost-effective results.

For example, the usage projections for Route 355 South for segments between the Grosvenor Metro station and the Bethesda Metro station (Plan page 94) do not show any material difference in 2040 peak hour passengers between median busways and curb lane busways—but two-lane median busways are recommended nevertheless. This is so, even though median busways inherently would require expensive and disruptive reconstruction of Rockville Pike, additional right-of-way usage, and left turn restrictions, while a key alternative treatment—curb lane busways—could be implemented far more cheaply and far less disruptively.

Consequently, the Council should require that the Plan specify that the choice of treatments in this inside-the-Beltway segment be based on analyses whose objective is to identify the treatment that provides for improved travel times for all transit patrons in the corridor segment (including local buses using local stops) and which does so in the most cost-effective, least impactful manner.

The following discussion describes the complexities in the segment from the Medical Center Metro Station north to the Grosvenor Metro Station. These complexities demonstrate that two-lane busways cannot be presumed to be the "recommended" treatment. Instead, cost-benefit, cost-effectiveness analyses should be used evaluate alternate BRT treatments, including curb-lane busways.

1. **Medical Center Metro Station complex north to Cedar Lane.** This segment will be undergoing \$100 million in BRAC-related infrastructure improvements. Two-lane median busways would appear to be in direct conflict with these improvements.
 - The County is currently seeking bids for construction of a \$70 million Metro station improvement that includes a pedestrian tunnel under Rockville Pike to provide a safe alternative for pedestrians to cross this busy intersection which provides vehicle access to the Metro station and access to NIH and Walter Reed. It seems contrary to the logic of this investment to build BRT stops in the *middle* of the Pike when the purpose of the tunnel is to maximize pedestrian traffic *under* the Pike. The project will also increase southbound left turn capacity into the Walter Reed campus (gate 2), improvements that seemingly would have to be ripped out to accommodate a median BRT guideway. Conversely, a curb lane southbound BRT stop could be added in conjunction with the existing bus bay on the south side of the intersection, and a northbound curb lane stop could be added on the north side of the intersection—or planned in conjunction with the kiss & ride now being discussed for just south of the new Walter Reed-side Metro entrance.
 - SHA is expected to award the Cedar Lane "Phase 3" contract by the end of October. That project makes several significant lane expansion improvements from Cedar Lane south to the NIH's Wilson Drive. In particular, additional southbound left turn capacity will be added to facilitate left turns into Walter Reed gate 1 (the main southbound entrance), while a new left turn lane and left turn capacity for the northbound Pike will be built to give trucks the ability to turn into NIH's Commercial Vehicle Inspection Station, whose entrance is opposite Walter Reed gate 1. Median lane BRT would interfere with these left turn capabilities and would require the rebuilding (if possible) of these projects.

- Conversely, the Phase 3 project will add dedicated right turn lanes into NIH's southbound entrances, and create a dedicated northbound right turn lane into Cedar lane. These projects would facilitate separation of right turning traffic from a repurposed BRT lane located in the current right through lane. (There is already a right turn lane into Cedar Lane for southbound Pike traffic; this lane will be extended to the northernmost NIH vehicle entrance.)

2. Cedar Lane to I-495

- The proposed Cedar Lane median busway stop and required left turn lane would seem to require significant widening of 355, particularly if the stop is located north of Cedar Lane. However, if a median BRT stop is located south of Cedar Lane, at the alignment of the current transit stops at the north end of the Walter Reed and NIH campuses, for example, higher stop usage might occur, and the potential impact on our communities might be reduced—but interference with the Phase 3 left turn projects could be increased. In contrast, a northbound BRT curb lane stop could be added just north of Cedar Lane, while the BRAC Phase 1 project added a bus bay just south of the north NIH vehicle entrance; this location could serve as the southbound Cedar Lane curb lane BRT stop.
- Median busways would shift high traffic volumes into curb lanes in this segment, increasing noise and pollution for adjacent residents in this segment, while a curb lane approach would serve as a buffer from such general traffic by limiting the curb lane to (low pollution) transit vehicles. NEPA noise studies undertaken in connection with potential Rockville Pike widening above Cedar Lane as part of BRAC planning found such widening would create noise levels higher than noise standards, requiring noise remediation.
- On 355's west side above Cedar Lane, at the Bethesda Crest Community, a series of below and above ground retaining walls and buttresses straddle a Forest Conservation Easement and community operational infrastructure with no alternate space to relocate these items. Alteration would entail a complicated construction project unto itself in order to preserve operational functionality and stability of hill and homes. Alteration to the internal road, which is already at maximum safe gradient, could also cause separation from its fit with houses and other features, and create public safety hazard. This road includes a WMATA Public Utility Easement for trucks and heavy equipment for a service tunnel that runs through the hill. Loss of this easement would increase vehicular hazard and compromise Metro maintenance or repair.

Because this is a commonly held property, all homeowners would be impacted; if key infrastructure were lost, the community might no longer be operationally or financially viable.

- Between Broad Brook Drive and Locust Hill Road, expansion of the Pike is constrained on the west side by a vertical retaining wall that abuts the Bethesda Meeting House's historic graveyard and on the east (Locust Hill) side by a sloped retaining wall/hillside down to the Pike's service road that supports the fill under the Pike. An SHA Historic Preservation Act assessment of the area in conjunction with BRAC planning called "the original stone structure of the retaining wall supporting the highway ... an unusual engineering feature."
- If a median busway is constructed, Rockville Pike widening might be necessary at Bellevue Drive/Alta Vista Road to permit a southbound left turn lane and queue. That signalized location is the SHA-designated U-turn point for east-bound Beltway traffic exiting onto southbound 355 wishing to go northbound on 355. Such an arrangement is necessary because the Beltway-355 interchange is incomplete and does not directly permit eastbound Beltway traffic to go northbound on 355. Moreover, just to the south of that intersection, the Pike is constrained by a narrow stretch of fill over a small valley.
- At the north end, the median portal where Metro emerges from under Rockville Pike to go over the Beltway forms a concrete and earthen berm immediately north of Pooks Hill Road. This structure could prevent northbound buses in a median busway from continuing northward from a center (left side) stop, unless the Pike's busway, left turn lane, and general travel lanes are shifted eastward. Conversely, it would appear relatively easy to expand the existing Ride-On sheltered stops on the Pike at Pooks Hill Road to become curb lane BRT stops.

3. I-495 to Grosvenor Metro.

- This segment is constrained by the complex Beltway intersection where 355 divides into two separate overpasses—each having both left and right-hand exit/entrance ramps—and where the Metro tracks emerge from the 355 median onto an aerial structure whose pylons constrain the width of northbound 355 where the Metro tracks cross over 355 above Grosvenor Lane as they approach the Grosvenor station.
- Indeed, the MC DOT cost study (page 7) expressly exempts these structures from the assumption that "reconstruction/widening is assumed necessary for all bridges

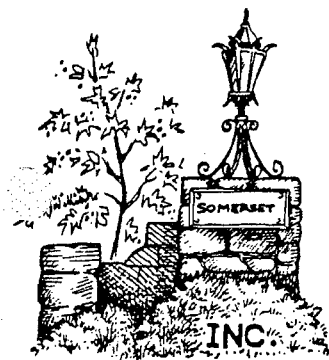
and underpasses where a median guideway is recommended” because modifications to these Beltway/Metro structures “were assumed to be too disruptive.”

- In this context, with appropriate signalization, the existing northbound bus bay on Rockville Pike at the Grosvenor Station and the southbound bus bays within the station could serve as a cost-effective transition point from two-lane median busways north of the station to curb lane busways south of the station. Use of the existing transit infrastructure might also make good use of the pedestrian tunnel under Rockville Pike connecting the Grosvenor station on the east side of the Pike to the multiple apartment complexes on its west side.

* * *

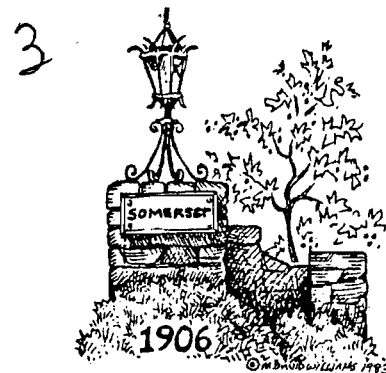
In conclusion, instead of endorsing a high-cost solution simply based on an abstract vision of high quality bus transit, the Council’s approach for the 355 South corridor should be to minimize any unnecessary cost burden to the County, its taxpayers, and transit users, and to minimize adverse effects to communities along the corridor, by requiring effective and open-minded analyses to evaluate appropriate treatments.

Having planners implicitly presume their mission is to implement a “gold standard” system that could prove too expensive to be built is surely inferior to having the Council require identification of less expensive, but effective, treatments that actually could be implemented at a reasonable cost—and with a minimum of community disruption. In short, “Don’t throw affordable transit under the bus!”



TOWN OF SOMERSET

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Jeffrey Z. Slavin
Mayor

Rich Charnovich
Town Manager/Clerk-Treasurer

TESTIMONY BY JEFFREY SLAVIN, MAYOR OF TOWN OF SOMERSET ON COUNTRYWIDE TRANSIT CORRIDORS FUNCTIONAL MASTER PLAN SEPTEMBER 24, 2013

Good Evening,

My name is Jeffrey Slavin and I am the Mayor of the Town of Somerset.

I am here tonight representing our historic, all female Town Council...Council Vice President Marnie Shaul and Council members Cathy Pickar, Barbara Zeughauser, Barbara Condos and Franny Peale.

As most of you know, our Town is located very close to the DC/Maryland line, just north of the Village of Friendship Heights. Wisconsin Avenue is our eastern border. Accordingly, for years we have done everything in our power to protect the quality of life along the Green Mile, which stretches from Bradley Boulevard south to Western Avenue. The importance of the trees and sidewalks on this Mile cannot be overstated, nor can the threat of potential harm to our pedestrians and children, due to the increasing number of commuter cars that use this thoroughfare every day.

While we applaud the County's interest in providing affordable and reliable transportation through potential projects like the BRT, we are also deeply concerned about the dramatic changes the BRT would bring to the Green Mile if dedicated lanes were established on Wisconsin Avenue south of the Bethesda metro.

We therefore urge you to consider removing any possibility of a dedicated BRT lane in this important corridor at this time. There seems to be a greater need for the BRT in other parts of our great county.

Your consideration of our views are appreciated.

(11)

14

Chevy Chase West Neighborhood Association Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

Testimony on Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan

County Council Public Hearing

September 24, 2013

I am Celesta Jurkovich, President of the Chevy Chase West Neighborhood Association (CCWNA). Chevy Chase West (CCW) is a community of 500 homes just west of MD355 between Bradley Boulevard and Drummond Avenue. I am representing the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights as well as my community association, which is one of its 18 members.

Our community is connected only through Wisconsin Avenue

I've provided a map that illustrates that the only access to our community is via Wisconsin Avenue, whose curb lane under the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan would be repurposed as a BRT lane from Bradley south to Western Avenue. No parallel streets exist here that can be used as a full alternative to Wisconsin Avenue.

We support better public transport options, but this is not one of them

My community has serious questions and concerns about this Master Plan, especially regarding the Bethesda-Friendship Heights segment. However, my testimony should not be taken as a rejection of the concept of bus rapid transit. CCW supports efforts to improve mass transit, and has been working steadily with local and state officials to enhance transit options for our residents, including more frequent, more accessible, and more reliable local bus service, and improved pedestrian and bike facilities. Our concerns cover both local and County-wide issues.

Ridership estimates are questionable

Planning staff computer modeling looked at the entire MD355 corridor. We believe that ridership will be considerably less than the 1440 per hour predicted between Bradley and Friendship Heights, in light of the lack of connectivity between Montgomery County bus service and DC bus service. There is currently no plan to extend service from either jurisdiction to the other. Current RideOn volume here is small, largely because of infrequent service and unsafe bus stops. An advantage of BRT is supposed to be quicker boarding and access, but this won't happen if travelers must transfer between Montgomery county buses and either the Red Line or DC buses. With BRT replicating the Metro route, there is even less incentive to take the bus.

Our community has been working diligently over several years to get better local mass transit. We need improvements to our four bus stops on each side of Wisconsin, and delineated crosswalks with appropriate traffic controls, hopefully as part of the State Highway Administration plan for a sidewalk/bikeway on the east side of Wisconsin. These are safety enhancements CCW and nearby communities need now. BRT will complicate our efforts to achieve these changes.

The proposal overlooks serious safety concerns for our neighborhood

The proposal ignores existing traffic issues on this mostly residential stretch of Wisconsin/MD355: first, vehicular access to Norwood Park, available only from Wisconsin Avenue, for the young children at the BCC Cooperative Preschool in the park, plus the athletes and coaching staff involved in soccer, football, softball, baseball, and lacrosse on weekday afternoons. Second, it ignores areas that are already effectively only two driving lanes -- the southbound curb lane of MD 355 between Somerset Terrace and Western Avenue is essentially a parking lane for delivery vehicles and vehicles dropping off patients to the medical buildings there (photos attached), and the curb lane between Willard and Western Avenue is already a designated right turn lane.

We believe restricting a curb lane to buses presents significant access and safety issues for our residents and guests. We expect more congestion in the remaining two lanes; difficulty in nosing into traffic to exit CCW southbound or crossing traffic to make a left turn northbound; difficulty enforcing a bus-only lane; and frustrated drivers seeking a shortcut through our neighborhood, especially in morning rush hour when our children are walking to Somerset Elementary school and students are being dropped off at Concord Hill school on Wisconsin.

When planners were challenged about the access problems that would be created by the BRT plan, CCW residents and others living west of Wisconsin between Bradley and Friendship Heights were assured that we would have better access to Wisconsin with BRT since traffic will be reduced in that southbound lane. However, answers to our questions about usage revealed that BRT buses are likely to pass every 3 minutes during peak hours with the lanes also being used by school buses, long distance buses traveling to and from NYC, existing Ride On buses, emergency vehicles, on-road bicyclists and any right turning vehicle. In addition, MD355 is repeatedly mentioned as a route which would justify all day BRT service, creating this problem not just at peak periods.

We recently had a taste of only two lanes southbound on Wisconsin as road work and signal issues restricted traffic in the curb lane. As a result, traffic backed up from Somerset Terrace, sometimes all the way to Bradley Blvd., making it very difficult to exit or enter our neighborhood streets. To bypass delays, frustrated drivers on 355 southbound used a parallel street, which runs for only 5 blocks, lacks full sidewalks, and is only reached via Wisconsin Avenue, and which is also the only route to school for most of our children..

Assumptions underlying the proposed BRT are unproven

The County Department of Transportation in its comments on the initial Planning Board draft correctly analyzed what this Functional Master Plan does. According to MCDOT, the Plan assumes that this BRT plan would improve the overall operation of the roadway network for drivers by increasing average travel speeds and reducing the growth in congestion countywide. However, the Plan does not demonstrate or prove the validity of this assumption. MCDOT also noted that "there is little documentation of the impacts of the proposed RTS corridor implementation on traffic, pedestrian, bicyclist and commercial roadway users. In addition, the

scale of the analysis is too broad to understand the impact of repurposing lanes on the roadway and in the surrounding facilities that will have to serve the detour traffic.” The attached MCDOT chart also raises questions about the thresholds used to justify BRT and bus capacities.

MCDOT is currently conducting additional analyses that could guide the Council in deciding how accurate major assumptions are. Practical information about what potential riders will experience is being discussed by MCDOT staff in public meetings. Riders will not walk more than half a mile to get to a bus stop. BRT will never have metro-like speeds. The highest quality 2-lane median BRT with limited stops will achieve, at best, 20 MPH speeds; buses currently average 13 mph. Ridership demand forecasting has not been done, only computer modeling which has known limitations recognized in the plan.

... and financing implications alarming...

Another summary prepared by MCDOT staff compares BRT initiatives in the US (attached). The plan the Council is considering is huge in scale compared to other systems – in length, ridership, and proposed number of stations. The cost has not yet been determined but is a key question for County residents. Estimates range from \$1.8 billion to \$10 billion. County Executive Ike Leggett’s Rapid Transit System (RTS) Steering Committee’s Finance Working Group in April listed as its first responsibility identifying alternatives for financing the system, including but not limited to:

- Special taxing districts
- Public private partnerships
- Leveraging federal and state grants and aid
- Reallocation of existing property tax
- Loans from the FHA

Council members, residents, and property owners should have this information before the Council makes any decisions on accepting this master plan.

... as are the ROW implications

Advocates for this Functional Plan minimize its implications, saying it only gives the County the legal basis for using and acquiring rights of way (ROW) for BRT. Citizens potentially affected by these routes see it as much more threatening. The right of way recommended in the Functional Plan is the MINIMUM recommended ROW. However, a careful reading of Appendix 11 – available only online - shows that more than the minimum may be required. In fact, the plan document states on page 31 that “Recommended rights-of-way should be considered minimum rights-of-way and additional right-of-way will also be required at some intersections to accommodate turn lanes.” The typical rights-of-way associated with stations and turn lanes at intersections are shown in Online Appendix 11. The language in the Functional Master Plan provides the legal authority for the County to take as much land as they want and to widen as much as they want. There’s nothing binding about the plan’s “recommended minimum” right of way. Appendix 11 delineates what ROW is actually needed for each type of road use which may be the standard required when implementation occurs in future years. At some point in the future, homeowners (including possibly residents of Chevy Chase West with

homes along Wisconsin Avenue) may find the transit planners recommending purchase of additional right-of-way for BRT, resulting in the loss at least of property in front and side yards. At a minimum, modeling of current ROW and preferred ROW for various treatments on the four priority routes should be done to identify the scale of any property displacements, and the results made public in a timely manner for property owners to understand.

We need community-specific analysis and consultation

Accepting this Functional Master Plan also means the Council is approving routes located in several different planning areas of the county, rather than doing it as part of the respective master/sector plan processes. This eliminates the potential benefit of looking at the need for, and cost/benefit of, building BRT in each area, and coordinating land use recommendations in each plan with a new BRT system and its facilities.

The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, which served as a consultant to the Planning Board, has specific standards and a point system to determine whether implementing BRT will make sense in terms of costs and benefits. These standards should be carefully applied within segments of the proposed routes, rather than simply adopting a one-size-fits all proposal, wherein standards and goals that are fine for one segment may not be appropriate for another. Improving local bus service, including feeder routes to Metro, should be of at least equal importance with creating a new, unproven, expensive BRT system.

In the interim, these are our suggestions

Essential ridership demand forecasts, crucial financial projections and modeling of current and preferred ROW identifying the scale of property displacements must be provided to residents and the Council before the Master Plan is approved.

Communities along proposed BRT routes MUST be consulted and heard throughout the planning and implementation process. As you have heard earlier, we – local residents – know some things that planners don't about our traffic patterns and needs. Accordingly, we have the following suggestions for BRT planning along our neighborhood boundary:

- Any MD355 BRT should go only to the Bethesda metro stop as its southernmost point.
- Extension southward from Bethesda should be dependent on and developed in conjunction with extension of WMATA bus lines between DC and MD.
- Drop-off issues between Somerset Terrace and Willard Avenue should be dealt with before designating a curb bus lane.
- Local bus service between Bethesda and Friendship Heights should be improved to enhance possible subsequent BRT use on this stretch.
- Crosswalks and appropriate traffic controls must be instituted before designating bus lanes on both sides of MD355 between Bradley and Western, to improve safe access for pedestrians, local bus and BRT, and other modes of transportation.
- If and when bus lines are extended between Maryland and DC, two stops between Bradley and Western should be part of any BRT plan, in accord with general practice of stops every half mile to mile.

11111 Jolly Way
Kensington, MD 20895
September 20, 2013

The Honorable Nancy Navarro, President
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan

Dear President Navarro and other Council Members:

I am writing in support of the BRT proposal as designated in the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan. My comments pertain to the two corridors where I am most knowledgeable.

- A. Corridor 4: MD 355 South
- B. Corridor 6: North Bethesda Transitway

Having been actively involved in the evolution of the White Flint Sector Plan and having dealt with increasing traffic congestion, I recognize the necessity of planning for additional public transportation that is reasonable in cost, flexible in design, and accessible to a variety of users in the County.

Corridor 4: MD 355 South

Implementing BRT on Route 355 south is a vital component in the White Flint Sector Plan and a necessary step towards relieving some of the increased congestion coming from increased development. I support the two-way median transitway from the Rockville Metro Center to Bradley Boulevard, although I have serious reservations about the area south of Cedar Lane. This functional plan proposes to replace two vehicular traffic lanes with the two lanes for BRT south of Cedar Lane. I believe the reduction of these existing lanes sets up conditions for massive gridlock until such time as BRT reaches its full capacity. I suggest that it would be fairer to the residents that are forced to drive in this area to begin with a mixed traffic transitway south of Cedar Lane, and consider reuse of existing lanes only after ridership on BRT has reached a significant level.

Corridor 6: North Bethesda Transitway

I am especially pleased with the proposed routing of the North Bethesda Transitway to the White Flint Metro Station. Moving the terminus from Grosvenor to White Flint recognizes development of the activity center at White Flint and will increase public transportation options between Montgomery Mall, Rock Spring, and White Flint, areas all designed for providing a total living experience.

However, the planned implementation for this corridor includes a one lane reversible median on Old Georgetown Road between Executive Blvd and Rock Spring Drive. This

is inconsistent with the development of activity centers. The potential for ridership between these activity centers is more diverse than just commuters. The corridor has the potential to support shoppers, restaurant goers, park users, and night life activities, as well as commuters.

Additionally, I believe there should be a BRT stop at the corner of Nicholson Lane and Old Georgetown Road adjacent to Wall Park. This stop could replace the planned stop on Old Georgetown (MD 187) and Edson Lane/Poindexter Lane. The White Flint Sector Plan has a major public amenity planned for the Wall Park site. With additional planned activities on new green space, expanded use of the Shriver Aquatic Center, and development of a Recreation Center on the same site, this park is designed to become a major community and countywide focal point. The planned stops on the North Bethesda Transitway corridor require riders from the west to either walk from Edson Lane or travel to the White Flint Metro Station, and then walk back to the Wall Park complex. While this is doable, a direct stop at Wall Park would encourage more transit ridership, publicize the amenities at the site, and benefit the general public. I understand that more detailed analysis will determine the specific location and size of transit stations. However, given that this functional master plan specifies where transit stops are located, I urge you to consider locating a stop on Old Georgetown Road near Wall Park.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this process.

Sincerely,

Natalie Goldberg

cc: Glenn Orlin

(17)